

Remarkable Progress Shown By Colored Race in Washington

Negroes Own Approximately \$20,000,000 Worth of Property in This City and Thousands Live in Their Own Homes—Engage in Every Line of Business—Banker John W. Lewis Gives Some Interesting Information Regarding the Prosperity of the Race.

WHEN a representative of The Herald recently called on John W. Lewis, president of the Industrial Savings Bank and of the Laborers and Mechanics' Realty Company, at 206 Eleventh street northwest, for the purpose of requesting an article for The Herald's feature edition on the progress of the colored race in the city of Washington during recent decades, he found Mr. Lewis submerged in a press of business and on the eve of leaving for a three weeks' vacation in New England.

"If I had time I would take great pleasure in giving The Herald such an article," said Mr. Lewis. "For there is much to be said of interest in regard to the remarkable progress of the colored race in the city of Washington, as well as throughout the nation, but I am rushing through some work here in the bank to leave on my vacation and it is impossible."

"Well, if you will sit down a short time maybe you can give me what The Herald wants in an interview," said the reporter.

"I was never interviewed in my life, but we will try it," said Mr. Lewis, with a smile, and immediately led the way to his office in the rear of the bank. The neatly furnished office had one striking feature in a large card over the president's desk bearing a money-lending motto. The one word on the card was "THINK."

"That is Mr. Lewis' business motto. And his thinking has brought him success."

Growth of Business Lines.

"When I came to Washington in 1892," said Mr. Lewis, "there were two drug stores run by colored people; now there are twenty-seven drug stores. There was one real estate broker; now there are ten real estate firms. A similar growth might be cited in all lines of business, and I will touch on that later. The only line of business that hasn't increased so far as the number engaged in the business is concerned is the banking business. There was one bank in Washington when I came here. It went out of business and the bank of which I am president is the only bank in Washington managed by colored people. We have a paid up capital of \$5,000 and about 1,000 depositors with assets of approximately \$25,000."

"The ten leading real estate dealers are T. Walker, the Hill-Pendleton Company, L. S. King, the Clark Williams Plummer Company, J. L. Taylor, Joseph H. Johnston, the Oak Park Realty Company, the Mutual Improvement Company, the Laborers and Mechanics' Realty Company, and I am of the impression that there are a number of others."

"Are the colored people of Washington showing any disposition to invest in real estate or to purchase their own homes?"

"Oh, yes, to a surprising and most creditable extent. Colored people who buy real estate do not buy it as a speculation. They either buy it as an investment, as a solid method of saving their money in the future, or else they buy in order to build a home. I have heard it said on good authority that the colored



DR. E. D. WILLISTON.

Dr. Edward Davis Williston was born in Fayetteville, N. C. He attended the public schools of that city, the State Normal at Fayetteville, and the Biddle University at Charlotte, N. C. After leaving Biddle University he attended the Howard University of this city, from which he was graduated in 1890 A. B., M. D. in 1894, and he immediately began his practice here. He was professor of medical jurisprudence at Howard University for over ten years, at present professor of obstetrics. He now holds the position as secretary of the advisory staff of the Freedman's Hospital, the largest and best equipped colored hospital in the United States, and is also obstetrician of that institution. Dr. Williston is a professional man who is known all over the United States, and he has traveled over the United States, Canada, and Mexico, and is very highly spoken of by all who have met him in his travels or who live in the community with him. He prides himself on being a staunch Republican. He is a member of a number of the largest and best fraternal organizations of this city, a member of the Masons, the Odd Fellows, and all noted fraternal organizations. On March 4, 1896, he was married and now resides with his wife and family of three at their residence at 1312 S street northwest, of this city.

Dr. Williston is one of Washington's most noted colored citizens and is always willing and does co-operate with any movement that is for the benefit of Washington and for the colored people of this city or the country at large. He is without question a man of note in every respect and a citizen of Washington can and is proud of, and is always ready and willing to do his part in any movement started for the benefit of the community or country.

people of Washington own real estate valued at \$20,000,000, or something near that figure.

"That's a fine showing for the race, financially, isn't it?"

Numerous Professional Men.

"The number of colored men in the various professions, and particularly lawyers, doctors, and dentists, has increased even more rapidly than the number of colored men engaged in business," continued Mr. Lewis. "There are between seventy-five and 100 doctors, twenty-five or thirty dentists, and I don't know how many lawyers."

"Can you give me the names of some of the leading men in these professions?"

"Well, of course I couldn't think of them all off hand, but I'll name a few anyway, and if I overlook any it must be understood that I mean no offense. Some of the more prominent physicians are Dr. A. M. Curtis, Dr. Simon L. Carson, Dr. John H. Johnston, Dr. Tignor, Dr. S. S. Thompson, Dr. Michel O. Dumas, Dr. Charles H. Marshall, Dr. E. D. Williston, Dr. Phillip Brooks, Dr. W. A. Warfield, and many others of capability. Dr. Carson is a surgeon of note. Dr. Williston is a specialist, and Dr. Warfield is chief surgeon of Freedmen's Hospital. The latter physician is renowned for his skill in abdominal surgery, and has the honor of having conceived the plan and raised most of the funds for the construction of Freedmen's Hospital, which cost \$600,000, and has no superior in the world as a hospital devoted to the care of the colored race."

"Among the dentists whom I personally know as high-class professional men are Dr. E. G. Evans, Dr. Ambrose E. Gaskin, Dr. Robert Peyton, and Dr. John R. Francis, Jr., who is at the head of the Howard Dental Parlor."

"From many colleges of law came many talented colored lawyers in the last twenty years. Dr. Thomas L. Jones is rated as one of the finest criminal lawyers we have. Among other brilliant legal lights, as attorneys were once called in country papers, are A. W. Scott, Fountain Peyton, E. M. Hewlett, W. Calvin Chase, E. P. Moore, and a score of others. In the courts of the District the colored lawyers hold their own and have distinguished themselves in many important cases."

Fourth Estate Represented.

"You must not forget your own profession—that of the fourth estate," Mr. Lewis continued, "for the colored people in Washington have two excellent papers managed and edited by colored men who are clever and brilliant writers. There is 'The Bee,' of which W. Calvin Chase is editor and publisher, and 'The Washington Eagle,' the editor and publisher of which is J. Finley Wilson. These papers thoroughly cover all the news of interest to the colored people and are widely read. Both are weekly papers, and I wouldn't be surprised if a daily paper devoted to the colored race were to make its appearance some time in the future."

"How largely have the colored people gone into business for themselves and how many colored merchants cater to their race alone?"

"There are about twenty such merchants, the majority of whom are connected with the market. Ware's department store on Fourteenth street, Holland's haberdashery on Seventh street, and Foster's dye works on Eleventh street, are among the largest

business establishments conducted by colored people.

"Of course there are numerous pressing and cleaning places run by colored men and women, but their number does not seem to lessen their prosperity as the people of Washington are particular, you know, in respect to keeping their clothes neatly pressed. Generally speaking, I would say that nearly every line of business in which white people engage has its representative negro establishment. The colored men engaged in industrial work, in educational work, and in all lines of business, as well as in professional men, are making creditable records for themselves and their race in Washington and even greater progress will come with the future years."

Many Churches and Schools.

"Yes, the colored people are provided with numerous churches and schools. I believe the colored school system in this city is the best in the world. The District is now constructing a high school solely for colored students which will surpass anything of the kind in the country. The Howard University has a reputation from coast to coast as a high-class educational institution and it is doing a great work in the advancement of the race."

"There are nearly 100 churches—to be exact, I believe the number is 96—of which 62 are devoted to the Baptist denomination and the others are of the Episcopal, Methodist, and Presbyterian denominations. The pulpits of these churches are filled by preachers of education and ability, some of whom are known as among the most eloquent divines in the country. Thirty or forty thousand people form the combined membership of these churches and it is greatly to the credit of the race that the majority of them regularly attend the Sunday school and the church services every Sunday. The morals of the colored community are high and I am sure that everyone will agree that we are, as a rule, an exceptionally law-abiding people."

"Among the talented preachers I may mention Dr. Walter H. Brooks, Dr. M. W. Norman, Dr. B. W. Rivers, Dr. A. Powell, Dr. Alexander Carroll, Dr. W. C. Brown, Dr. A. C. Garner, Dr. Francis J. Grimké, Dr. Daniel P. Seaton, Dr. C. H. Steptean, and others."

Three Theaters and Two Parks.

"Of course, we have our social side of life and our amusement places," continued Mr. Lewis. "There are three theaters devoted to moving-picture shows, two of which are owned by colored people, the Howard, the Howard and the Dudley. They provide clean amusement features and give the best film plays in the market. The Howard Theater provides comedy and dramatic productions during the winter months and the performances are always well attended."

"Two parks in Anacostia—Green Willow Park and Eureka Park—are popular out-of-door recreation places for colored people, and they are thronged every evening during the summer months."

"As for colored society in Washington, I don't suppose it can be equaled for refinement among the colored race in any city of the land. Personally, I am afraid many of our young men and women spend too much time and money in social pleasures, which leads to extravagance in dress and a style of living not entirely conducive to individual prosperity, but, of course, we must have our social life, and it is well that our Washington colored society has a nation-wide reputation for being high-toned."

In closing the interview The Herald man said:

"So this is the first time you were ever interviewed?"

"Yes, the first time—it is a new experience for me," replied Mr. Lewis.

"How do you like it?"

Mr. Lewis smiled and said: "Well, it wasn't quite as painful an operation as I thought it would be."

Delivers a Speech in Boston.

On his vacation Mr. Lewis visited Boston, Providence and Newport. In Boston he attended the convention of the Negro

Business League, of which Booker T. Washington is president. At one of the sessions of the convention Mr. Lewis gave an interesting talk on "Banks and Banking," in which he made some striking statements. The paper follows in full:

Mr. president, ladies and gentlemen of the National Negro Business League, my subject, "Banks and Banking," is by no means a new one. Solomon said aptly: "There is no new thing under the sun."

Traces of credit by compensation and by transfer orders are found in Assyria, Phoenicia and Egypt. Clay tablets in the British Museum taken from the ruins of Babylon show that as far back as the days of Nebuchadnezzar, loans of silver at interest were made and loans secured by mortgage on land.

In Babylon banking was carried on as early as 700 B. C. This seems to be the first firm. The Chinese understood the use of paper money hundreds of years before the European nations, and established a bank about A. D. 1000. But banking as we understand it did not commence before 1584. The bank of Venice was established in 1171. The bank of Sweden in 1656. This bank still exists. The Bank of England was founded in 1694, the Bank of France in 1800.

You will notice that the great financial institutions of the world count their ages by the hundreds and hundreds of years. We may be somewhat disappointed at the slowness with which negro banks have come into existence and the slowness with which they have increased their financial resources.

Never Taught to Save.

But, Mr. President, the reason is easily seen. We do not know the value of money; we have never been taught to save. We have never been taught the lesson, "Look after the pennies, nickles and dimes, and the dollars will look after themselves."

Evidence of this is seen every minute of the day in our race. If sugar is 8 cents a pound, and 12-2 cents, meat 12-2 cents, we buy one pound, three pounds and the like, without ever stopping to think how we can save those half pennies and what they mean.

Take a pound of tea, sixteen ounces, which sells for 20 cents. What do we do? We send to the store for 5 cents' worth. This is done day after day, thus paying 80 cents for tea. Any time the child and even the adult says to the merchant, "Give me 10 cents' worth of meat," if the meat is 12-2 cents per pound, you get about three-quarters of a pound and there is saved to the merchant about 3 cents on the pound.

My friends, there is scarcely a person under the sound of my voice who has not witnessed the above. What are we going to do about it? Where is the remedy? Can't we learn from that merchant of merchants, the Jew? He knows our weakness and preys on it. He opens his shops in our midst and smiles and bows, pets our children, gives them cake and candy until he catches the old dice. That is his molasses. In a few years he is able to move in larger and more spacious quarters. He has grown rich off our pennies, nickles and dimes.

Why Are Our Banks Few?

Mr. President, we have a population in round numbers of ten millions and these ten millions of people spend yearly between three and five hundred millions of dollars. We have the people. We have the money. Why haven't we the banks? One reason is, we do not know how to manage and operate a bank. We have no opportunity to serve as apprentices and thus become proficient in conducting the same. We only learn by doing. Let us have more banks.

The negro in the employment of a white bank is there as a messenger, janitor, or watchman. He is not promoted for faithful service, honesty, education nor ideal character. No reward is for him save a few extra dollars at Christmas time.

A second good reason: Negroes who have money just simply prefer to walk in the old paths of their parents and deposit in white banks. Mr. President, no depositors means no bank. The white man likes to handle and control the negroes' money, paying him 2, 3 and 4 per cent. interest and charging him 6, 7 and 8 per cent., and a bonus for lending it back to him. They employ men to solicit the influential negro and they advertise Mr. A and B deposit here as a magnet to draw thousands of other depositors.

Mr. President, I live in the Capital of the nation with a population in and around Washington of 125,000 colored people with more culture and intelligence, it is said, than any other city in the country.

For necessities of life it costs them \$75.00 a year per capita. In other words, it costs \$3,750,000 for necessities

Twenty per cent of this amount would give \$750,000, and with this amount we can build 300 houses at a rental value of \$75,000 a year or \$22 per month each. One wholesale grocery store with a capital of \$50,000; one shoe store with a capital of \$60,000; one department store with a capital of \$100,000 and two banks with a paid up capital of \$250,000, leaving a balance in a reserve fund of \$175,000.

This 20 per cent would make business that would require 530 people at a salary from \$8 to \$20 per week.

In December, 1905, with three men and two women, viz: John W. Staley, L. B. Williams, Susie P. Robb, the late Rowena Lumpkins and your humble servant (John W. Lewis), with assets amounting to \$13.50, organized the Laborers and Mechanics' Realty Company. Today that corporation has a paid up capital of \$250,000 with assets of over \$75,000 and has paid a dividend of 5 per cent for four years.

When this league was in session in Philadelphia in 1913 we had just opened in Washington a shoe store of which Mr. Richard Ware is proprietor and about the same time a gent's furnishing store, Mr. Robert Holland, proprietor, just a few doors from the shoe store.

Both of these enterprises have out-

grown their original quarters and Mr. Ware's shoe store is now a department store, on the popular Fourteenth street northwest, with a delivery car, a growing business and several clerks. The Holland haberdashery is now on Seventh street northwest, another business street, in a store 3500 well stocked, two salesmen and a delivery wagon, with everything looking prosperous.

We have twenty-seven drug stores, two as fine insurance companies as can be found in the country, employing 700 young men and women as clerks and agents. Grocery stores, tinners, contractors are numerous and new ventures are cropping up all over town. There is a business revival especially in the north-west and you street from Seventh to Fourteenth is on a business boom among our people.

In February, 1913, the Industrial Savings Bank was organized and began business May 1, 1913. On June 4, 1913, this bank's assets amounted to \$170,43 and 106 depositors, and at the close of business June 30, 1915, the assets were \$32,995.97 and the depositors 997.

And so, Mr. President, members of the league, ladies and gentlemen, there is a bright day just ahead for banks and banking and business in general in the magnificent city of

Washington. We are hopeful and we firmly believe that the day will come when the greatest negro bank of the land will be housed in Washington and some of the great merchants of the future will be the men who are struggling today laying a foundation for future mercantile greatness.

Our salvation is through the home, church and school. In every high and normal school a bank should be installed, giving the student not only a personal lesson in thrift but also a practical lesson in banks and banking. Such a system is already in vogue in the Armstrong Manual Training School of Washington, D. C., of which Prof. Garnett Wilkinson is principal. Until the preacher preaches and the teacher teaches faith in our own, we need not expect any rapid growth.

Mr. President, if I were a voice, a persuasive voice that could travel the wide world through, I would pray, preach and sing, "Negro business, negro combination, negro co-operation."

Let me close, Mr. President, by invoking upon you, your officers and members of the league heaven's blessings and God's guidance. May this session, from the standpoint of actual good accomplished, be the banner session, and may we all return to our several homes in safety, feeling it was good for us to have been here.



REV. W. C. THOMPSON.

Rev. William Clifford Thompson was born in Houston County, Georgia, November 11, 1852. His father, Daniel Thompson, was a noted colored man of Georgia, and was elected to the legislature at one time, but declined to accept on account of the existing conditions. He attended the public schools of Georgia, and later attended the Clarke University of Atlanta, Ga., from which he graduated from the industrial department in 1884 and the academic department in 1895. After leaving the Clarke University he attended the Lincoln University in Pennsylvania from which he graduated in 1898 and he then went to the Drew Theological Seminary at Madison, N. J., and after completing his studies there he finished his education by taking up post graduate work at the Garrett Biblical Institute at Evanston, Ill., which was in 1904. He was ordained as a minister in 1901, shortly after leaving the Drew Theological Seminary, and his first charge was the Mount Zion Watercourt Church at Baltimore which he held for two years. He is now pastor of the Mount Zion M. E. Church located on Twenty-ninth street between Dumbarton and O streets northwest, Washington, D. C., and has held this charge for over two years. In that time he has repaired the building in a number of ways and has increased the membership about 200 which makes a total now of over 500. Rev. Thompson was associate editor of the Ecumenical Methodist Conference which was held in Toronto, Canada, in 1911, and was also a delegate to the Methodist Episcopal General Conference which was held in Minneapolis, Minn., in 1912. He has written a number of articles showing what the colored people of the country are doing and what his ideas are in doing things for their betterment, and there has been much comment on his work of this kind. He was returned to Washington after the annual Conference meeting owing not only to the good work that he had done in the two years that he had been here, but also to the fact that his congregation were so well pleased with him that on the eve of his leaving for conference they gave him a large purse and forwarded letters to the conference with urgent appeals for his return which was granted them. The condition of the Mount Zion Church was never better in years than it is at the present time, all credit for which is due to Rev. Thompson. Rev. Thompson is one of Washington's most representative colored citizens and one of which it can well be proud. He now resides with his wife and family at their beautiful home at 2903 O street northwest, this city.

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